

CLASSICS AND COMMUNISM

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CLASSICS AND COMMUNISM

Greek and Latin behind
the Iron Curtain

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Classics in Hungary and the Party Line: The Case of Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel

Péter Hajdu

Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel (1908–1970), a key figure in classical studies during the Communist era in Hungary, both from the viewpoint of his scholarly achievement and his influence on academic life, had no real chance of assuming a position in the academic world before World War II. After he finished his university studies in 1932 in Budapest, he worked at odd jobs at various publishing houses. His essays, however, which he frequently published in scholarly journals and the *Sziget* booklets edited by Károly Kerényi,¹ suggest that he must have been one of the most talented classicists of his generation. Two of the causes of his marginalisation merit particular mention.

One of the reasons was that Trencsényi-Waldapfel belonged to the core of the intellectual circle of Kerényi. The most memorable ideological conflict of the nineteen-twenties and thirties is usually referred to as the “Kerényi-versus-Moravcsik debate,” although a significant number of scholars were involved on

1 For the series see my paper “Concepts of Europe in the *Sziget* Booklets,” in *(Multiple) Europe: Multiple Identity, Multiple Modernity — Europes (multiples): Identités multiples, modernités multiples*, ed. Monica Spiridon (Bucharest: Ararat Publishing House, 2002), 143–155.

both sides.² The topic was the mission and the most desirable strategy for classical scholarship in Hungary, and the conclusion of the debate was somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, the cause of “classical philology of national interest” proposed by Moravcsik, who emphasised the importance of locally-embedded research and wanted to focus on Byzantine studies and provincial archaeology, triumphed in academic life, since all the key positions were occupied by its representatives during the nineteen-thirties. On the other hand, talented members of the younger generation wanted to be Kerényi’s disciples, and the subsequent generation was educated by his circle. Both statements are true of Trencsényi-Waldapfel. He evidently was one of Kerényi’s disciple and, as mentioned, he had no chance of assuming a position in the academia before the end of World War II.

Another cause was his Jewish origin, since educational policy in Hungary at the time was explicitly anti-Semitic. The *numerus clausus* of 1920 was the first anti-Jewish Act of twentieth-century Europe, and it was not actually abolished, but only stylistically mitigated in 1928.³ One could mention the case of Károly Marót (1885–1963) as similar. Marót was a highly innovative scholar who combined literary and ethnographic studies in his research on Homer, publishing extensively in the thirties. He was not appointed professor by the Ministry of Education, although he was actually running the Department of Classical Philology at the University of Szeged. The Ministry passed him over three times between 1932 and 1945 because of his Jewish origins.⁴

AN INSTANT POST-WAR COMMUNIST

Trencsényi-Waldapfel’s adaptation to the new situation after World War II, however, was highly successful. When the Russian

2 János G. Szilágyi, “Trencsényi-Waldapfel Imre,” *Antik Tanulmányok* 17 (1970): 150–153.

3 Péter T. Nagy, *The Social and Political History of Hungarian Education*, chapter on “The ‘Numerus clausus’ policy of anti-semitism or policy of higher education,” available online at the webpage of the Hungarian Electronic Library.

4 Zsigmond Ritoók, “Emlékezés Marót Károly r. tag fölért,” available online at the webpage of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

invasion put an end to the period in which he faced the direct threat of death — from which he took refuge in the home of Árpád Szabó⁵ — he became an enthusiastic and committed Communist. The new regime offered him brilliant career opportunities. In 1948 he was appointed professor and head of the Department of Classical philology at the University of Szeged, and the following year he was made rector of the university. In 1950 he received the chair at ELTE, the largest and most prestigious university in Hungary, and was appointed its rector in 1950 (until 1953). In between these university duties he worked for the Ministry of Education as the head of the Department of Higher Education and Museums. In 1949 he was elected a corresponding member of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and the following year he was awarded full membership. This was not a simple honorary title, but a position of power.

If one reads up on the history of the Academy, one learns that it was founded in 1827. However, this continuity is little more than continuity of name. In 1949 the Academy was transformed, or rather a new Academy was founded. It was modelled on the Soviet example and retained hardly anything of the former institution, apart from its name. The Academy lost its autonomy and was put under direct Communist Party control. Its new duties included “ensuring a succession of scientists, the operation of postgraduate training, developing a unified, centralised system of new academic degrees, and academic qualification.” It was the job of the Academy “to supervise scientific societies, direct the publication of scholarly books and journals, and promote international scientific relations.”⁶ Within this totalitarian academic system, Class One supervised linguistic and literary studies, and inside this class a Committee for Classical Philology was responsible for classical studies. Classical scholarship, like all other academic pursuits, had to function within the framework of this highly centralised academic system, as was the case in all the other countries of the region. The whole of academic

5 Oral communication by Szabó's daughter, Petra Gizella Szabó.

6 *A Brief History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (1825–2001)*, available online at the institutional webpage.

life was supervised and controlled by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and Trencsényi-Waldapfel became a key figure. As János György Szilágyi wrote in his obituary, “He was the main representative of classical studies in Hungary, no doubt.”⁷

TRENCSÉNYI-WALDAPFEL’S ROLE IN SCHOLARLY JOURNALS

His influence can also be seen in the editorial committees of academic journals. The pre-war periodicals were mostly abolished and new ones were established. *Acta Antiqua*, which was among the first, was intended to create an international forum for Hungarian classical scholars, and it published papers in foreign languages. Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel was the first managing editor, a position he held for twenty years — in other words, until the end of his life. “Managing editor” is a translation. The journal indicated the editor in Latin with the verb *redigit* and an editorial committee of three with a sort of *ablativus absolutus*, “adiuvantibus Aladár Dobrovits, János Harmatta, Gyula Moravcsik.” The journal was able to drive home various ideological messages through the work of the editors. The first volume leaves no doubt as to the centre of international classical scholarship: it was the Soviet Union. It is hardly a coincidence that first issue of *Acta Antiqua* begins with a paper in Russian by Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel himself, in spite of the fact that the general principle governing the sequence of the articles in every issue was the chronological order of the discussed topics. A hierarchy of languages is suggested by the order of the four versions of the introductory note — Russian, French, English, German. All the non-Russian papers had an abstract in Russian, while the summaries of the Russian papers varied in language. The proportion of papers in various languages is also suggestive. The first issue contained seven papers in Russian, six in French, five in German, three in English, and one in Latin. These proportions were artificially and intentionally created by the editors, since the papers were originally submit-

7 Szilágyi, “Trencsényi-Waldapfel” 149.

ted in Hungarian. A committee meeting report, which goes back to 1953, contains a decree according to which “managing editor Trencsényi-Waldapfel should make sure the translators receive the material of the third issue of *Acta Antiqua* before May 1.”⁸ Many of the contributors were able to write papers in a foreign language, though perhaps not in Russian, and one cannot know if the decree pertained to all of the papers or only some of them. In the nineteen-fifties, the editing of the journal was apparently not based on the principle of individual initiative. If the contributors had submitted the papers in foreign languages, it would have made the task of the censors terribly difficult, if not impossible. The strategy of having the papers translated gave the editors the opportunity to make decisions concerning the number of articles to be included in various languages. Numerically, the importance of Russian diminished dramatically after 1956.

However, editorial policy changed at the time as well. While in the fifties *Acta Antiqua* published papers almost exclusively by Hungarian authors, the presence of non-Hungarian contributors became stronger from 1959 on. Perhaps the editor tried to make a virtue of necessity. In 1956 many scholars left the country and others were banned from open scholarly fora. Some were killed. It probably was not easy to find an adequate number of articles for the journal, so he may have tried to transform it into an international periodical for classical scholarship of the socialist countries. The 1959 issue published proceedings of a conference held in Budapest, and for subsequent issues the journal apparently counted on Eastern European contributors as well, and also attempted to solicit contributions from Western scholars. The peak of this tendency came in 1974, when *Acta Antiqua* published the proceedings of the meeting of cuneiform scholars from the socialist countries. Only two of the forty-four papers were written by Hungarians; twelve were written by Western scholars, the title of the conference notwithstanding,

8 MTA Levéltár (Archive of Hungarian Academy of Sciences), “I. Nyelv és irodalomtudományok osztálya iratai 59.,” Klasszika-filológiai Bizottság 1953–1967, 11.

and the issue did not contain any papers in Russian, although many participants came from the Soviet Union.

In the new situation the editors had hardly any means of influencing the language of the articles. Russian became the language of occasional papers, as did Italian, Latin, and Greek. The rare exceptions are the years 1967 and 1977-78, when the journal actually appeared as *Festschrift*, dedicated to Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel and János Harmatta, respectively, and friends from the Soviet Union contributed. Otherwise *Acta Antiqua* published papers mostly in German, English, and French, and German became more or less dominant after 1956 in accordance with the traditional orientation of classical scholarship in Hungary and East-Central-Europe.⁹

The journal's Hungarian language counterpart, *Antik Tanulmányok* — *Studia Antiqua* appeared in 1954 for the first time, but a report from the Committee for Classical Philology, dated February 10, 1953, proves that the first volume had been ready for publication three years earlier; the Committee had not obtained permission from Academy authorities to start publishing it as a journal.¹⁰ The evidence suggests that the Committee had a plan to start both journals — one in Hungarian, one in foreign languages — simultaneously, but they were unable to convince the Academy that the Hungarian one was also noteworthy. Yet, they kept insisting in spite of the fact that they were encouraged to abandon the project. There are two hand-written notes by László Koch on behalf of the department secretariat of Class One on one of the petitions in which he suggested they should stop being so insistent. Moravcsik went to see “comrade Rusznyák” —

9 The strategy of collecting papers from the region began to lose currency in the eighties. With the death of the founding editor, Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, János Harmatta became the managing editor, and in the seventies he was still able to publish a journal in which the proportion of non-Hungarian contributors varied between 25 percent and 50 percent, with increasing numbers of Western scholars. After 1980, however, the journal experienced a collapse. Only two volumes were published in seven years. Volume 31 belonged to the years 1982–84 and volume 32 to 1985–88. Witnesses tend to blame Harmatta personally for the crisis.

10 MTA Levéltár, “I. Nyelv és irodalomtudományok osztálya iratai, 59,” Klasszika-filológiai Bizottság 1953–1967, 11.

namely István Rusznyák, president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences — for precisely this reason, but his visit yielded no results. Koch thought it would be a worthwhile idea to publish a collection of papers every year which would include papers translated from Russian as well.¹¹ Koch's plan would have resulted in a temporary compromise that would have forced the Committee for Classical Philology to negotiate the volumes financial support every year. However, the Academy finally accepted the plan to publish a journal. Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel was a member of the editorial committee from 1954 until his death in 1970.

On April 7, 1953, Koch suggested the establishment of an association that would own the journal *Antik Tanulmányok*.¹² In the end this proved superfluous, since the journal was published by the Academy's publishing house and financed by the Academy itself. Koch's idea, however, sounds somewhat strange. Was 1953 really a time when people were able to establish associations if they sought to do so? Did he honestly think that an academic journal needed an owner more or less independent from the Academy? A classical association was founded much later, in 1958, not due to any local initiative, but rather because of the 1957 declaration of the "Komitee zur Beförderung der klassischen Studien in den sozialistischen Ländern," according to which such associations should be founded everywhere in the socialist countries.¹³ Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel was one of the first vice-presidents (Gyula Moravcsik was the other one), and in 1970, shortly before his death, he was elected president of the Classical Society.

MARXISM AS A RESEARCH TOOL

Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel's involvement in the creation of the Communist academic system was based on his commitment, the foundations of which, however, were intellectual. Before World

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² Ibid., 30.

¹³ "Beszámoló az Ókortudományi Társaság megalakulásáról (1958. március 27)," *Antik Tanulmányok* 6 (1959): 164–165. The first president was Károly Marót.

War II his area of scholarly inquiry was European humanism, rather than classical studies exclusively. Antiquity had a place in it, as did Western humanism and Hungarian literary history. His research culminated in his book on *Erasmus and His Hungarian Friends*.¹⁴ At the turning point towards the Communist period of his career he wrote a thick volume entitled *Humanism and Marxism*.¹⁵ There he defined humanism as a value system that assesses all cultural phenomena from the viewpoint of their contribution to the development of the natural potential of humankind. This concept of humanism remained at the centre of his later research on classical antiquity, which included authors such as Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Menander, Cicero, and Terence, and he was always able to find a connection to the Communist *hic et nunc*. He published less from 1949–1954, a period during which he was most active in public or political terms, but he never stopped pursuing research concerning both literary and religious history.

His achievements in these two fields, however, were somewhat unequal, which may have been the result of the varying potential of Marxism as an approach, or of the theoretical framework in each. When he analysed a work of literature, he transformed it into a manifesto on topical social or political issues. The intractable and vulgar Marxist interpretations are somewhat flimsy, and the literary analyses tend to be slightly primitive. Religion is a different challenge. His papers on religion are usually brilliant despite the numerous quotations from Engels that sometimes play a vital role in his argumentation. In the Communist context an interest in literature was frequently condemned as “bourgeois aestheticism,” and the fact that literary historians and critics were compelled to interpret works of literature in accordance with the methods prescribed by the regime, namely as representations of social or economic facts, had a devastating effect on literary studies.

14 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Erasmus és magyar barátai* (Budapest: Officina, 1941).

15 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Humanizmus és marxizmus* (Budapest: Hungária, 1948).

Trencsényi-Waldapfel's paper on Terence's comedy staged at Lucius Aemilius Paulus' funeral¹⁶ merits some discussion. An analysis of a literary piece that takes the context of presentation as its starting point presents a compelling problem. For Trencsényi-Waldapfel, however, the context meant a political or ideological dimension exclusively, and therefore the comedy in his interpretation was nothing but a statement, hardly more complicated than an unambiguous assertion concerning which party was right in the contemporary ideological clash. This political analysis uses literature as a pretext for speaking about politics and shows no interest in the specifics of literature at all. The approach tends towards simplification, offering a clear illustration of why a Marxist bias has been usually more harmful in literary studies than in other fields of the humanities.

The role Marxism may play in a paper on the study of religious ideas seems different. In the middle of his paper on the myth of Danae in the East and West, there are two references to Engels on the same page.¹⁷ The first is a famous quotation: myths do not exclusively reflect the forces of nature, but also historical forces with social attributes. This is part of the Marxist critique of comparative mythology, a vital component of the author's argument in the paper. The second reference, however, seems rather superfluous, since Trencsényi-Waldapfel only mentions that Engels highlighted the rich variability of mythological *leitmotifs*, though at that point in his argument he needed something else. On top of that variability, highlighted with reason by Engels, there are striking similarities between cultures that never had any cultural exchange. Trencsényi-Waldapfel mentions that Engels had said something on the topic, which must be true. Strangely enough, however, Trencsényi-Waldapfel uses the citation to introduce a contradictory idea. The argument would have been better without a reference to Engels — but the Marxist flavour would not have been as strong.

16 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, "Terentius vígjátéka L. Aemilius Paulus temetésén," *Antik Tanulmányok* 4 (1957): 1–28.

17 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, "Danaé mítosza keleten és nyugaton," *Antik Tanulmányok* 3 (1956): 59.

Trencsényi-Waldapfel's Marxism appears in an exemplary form in his paper on the social background of the two myths of Adam,¹⁸ and this was probably the result of an intentional display of loyalty, since it was published as the opening paper in *Antik Tanulmányok*, the first issue of this Hungarian journal of classical studies, and therefore appeared as a leading article or an editorial for the community of classical scholars. It is a brilliant paper that tries to detect the different historical and social strata in the background of the two versions of the story of Adam in the book of *Genesis*. In a sort of conclusion, different attitudes towards work are attributed to nomadic or stock-raising and farming societies, respectively. Then Trencsényi-Waldapfel examines the question of why farming societies hate work. The answer is given in a Lenin quotation — this hatred is caused by the exploitation of labour. A quotation from Stalin gives the paper an uplifting finale: in the context of Communism exploitation has ceased to exist and work has become a matter of glory and honour. The structure of the paper seems to be designed to suggest that classical philology is an active and a topical branch of scholarship, able to formulate relevant messages for contemporary society. The ending is, however, somehow independent of the main paper, since the last question — answered through quotes from Lenin and Stalin — does not follow from the whole discussion. The discussion is based on the Marxist theory of analysis of cultural phenomena. In spite of the fundamentally Marxist approach, the pure scholarly work did not seem sufficient. To convince the authorities that classical philology was loyal to the regime, a coda with a Stalin quote was also needed as a sign of public genuflection.

This Marxist ornamentation, however, is not as valuable retrospectively as the innovative force of the Marxist approach to religious history. Here, Marxism at least implies a demand for interpretation from a different angle, which seems to enrich the meaning of the discussed phenomena. This is not meant to imply that Marxism is more adequate in the analysis of religion as a

18 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, "A két Ádám-mítosz társadalmi háttere," *Antik Tanulmányok* 1 (1954): 1–13.

social practice than in the analysis of literature as a representation of social practices. It nonetheless seems that, in the contemporary context of religious and literary studies, Marxist methods were more innovative when applied to religion. One arrives at a similar conclusion if one takes into consideration the effect on society, or at least the possibility of convincing those in power that scholarly activity can have such an effect. It would appear that fascination with ancient Classics was regarded as a symptom of bourgeois decadence from socialist leaders, while religion was always a hot topic. The evidence of Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel's correspondence shows that he spent a lot of time in committees responsible for anti-religious propaganda. Religious studies may have offered better career opportunities during the Communist period, and the required Marxist method probably offered more intensive intellectual inspiration.

The second edition of his collected papers suggests a similar evaluation of Trencsényi-Waldapfel's achievement in other fields. In 1959 he published a volume entitled *Studies in the History of Religion* [*Vallástörténeti tanulmányok*]¹⁹ and in 1981, more than a decade after his death, a sort of second edition was published with the same title, but with rather different content. The editor of this posthumous, retrospective volume, János György Szilágyi, wrote in his editorial that he omitted papers from the first edition that focused on literary history. On the other hand, he added some papers going back to the thirties, before Trencsényi-Waldapfel's Communist period had started, as well as papers written after the publication of the first edition. It is perhaps logical that a volume entitled "studies in the history of religion" should contain studies in the history of religion — but it might have been possible nonetheless to change the title. It would seem that Szilágyi would have been allowed to edit a volume entitled "studies in the history of religion and literature," or just "selected papers."²⁰ The thematic aspect of the selection

19 Also available in German translation as Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Untersuchungen zur Religionsgeschichte*, trans. Géza Engl (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó; Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1966).

20 János György Szilágyi, "Szerkesztői jegyzet," in Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel,

appears to be a rather ingenious pretext for a choice based on quality, although the editor seemed reluctant to admit it openly. Still, the result is a better volume. The focus on religion does not mean that literature plays no role in Szilágyi's selection. None of the papers interpret literature, but there are some that are based on comparative research on literary topics or themes, a subject in which Marxism had no restrictive influence on his intellect.

FAILURE TO ESTABLISH A LEGACY

Despite the career opportunities in religious history, Trencsényi-Waldapfel never created a school. This is interesting, since he held a position that enabled him to make decisions about human resources. Of course, he had to explain his decisions to the authorities, but it was him who was the decision maker. János György Szilágyi offers a polite explanation for the poor achievements of those selected by Trencsényi-Waldapfel: "He preferred working himself for several people to sacrificing human amity because of a lack of scholarly qualities."²¹ The case of Mária Révész, one of these people of "human amity," offers a clear illustration. She began her career in classical philology in the fifties, and her lack of creativity was so fundamental that she hardly published more than three papers in her entire life — fortunately, one might add. As the report of a meeting of the Committee for Classical Philology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences from January 16, 1953, reads, "Aspirant Mrs. Berényi, Mária Révész has received a harshly worded letter of admonition about her achievements from the department secretariat of Class One of the Academy." The Committee decided that Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel would represent her against Academy authorities.²² The authority to be confronted was the secretary of Class One, Tibor Klaniczay (1923–1992), whose sense for quality was legendary in the later phases of his administrative

Vallástörténeti Tanulmányok, 2nd ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1981),

543–544.

²¹ Szilágyi, "Trencsényi-Waldapfel," 165.

²² MTA Levéltár, "I. Nyelv- és irodalomtudományok osztálya iratai 59.," Klasszika-filológiai Bizottság 1953–67/8, report of the session held on January 16, 1953.

and organisational career. As later developments show, Klaniczay was evidently correct in his assessment of Révész's work, but Trencsényi-Waldapfel prevailed. She remained at the university for ages. The last letter by Trencsényi-Waldapfel, which is preserved in the manuscript collection of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, was sent to the dean of the Faculty for the Humanities of the Budapest University. In it he suggests that Mária Révész should receive an honorarium for teachers' day, since she had been a great help to the head of the department in several administrative issues.²³

The human resource policy of his time, however, was not a general failure, and not all the mistakes can be explained through reference to his patience with pleasant if untalented people. Miklós Maróth seems to suggest that during his lifetime some of the scholars who had been fired from the university in 1956 were never given any opportunity to return to scholarship, but immediately after his death János Harmatta, his successor in power, found a way to get back Zsigmond Ritoók and Tibor Szepessy.²⁴ This narrative is patently wrong in the case of Ritoók, who had a job at the Research Committee for Classical Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in early 1970, which was evidently prepared for him with Trencsényi-Waldapfel's consent.²⁵

MYTHOLOGY FOR THE MASSES

The regime wanted to be seen as promoting the interests of the working masses, and, as part of this project, products of so-called haute or elite culture should have been made accessible to the widest public. Even an eminent scholar like Imre

²³ May 14, 1970, MJ 4327/1–67.

²⁴ Miklós Maróth, "Classical Scholarship in Hungary," in *The Classics in East Europe*, eds. Victor Bers and Gregory Nagy (Worcester, MA: American Philological Association, 1995), 28–29.

²⁵ Maróth speaks of "the sudden death of Trencsényi-Waldapfel in 1968." Actually he died on June 3rd, 1970, and Ritoók was employed by the Academy (after long but, according to him, happy years of teaching at a secondary school) in February 1970. The initiative might have been that of Harmatta's, but the decision could not have been made without Trencsényi-Waldapfel.

Trencsényi-Waldapfel could have been involved in this project in two specific ways — as a writer of educational material for the general public and as a translator. His most popular book was his mythology. The first version was published in 1936 as *Greek and Roman Mythology*,²⁶ and it was published in a second edition in 1948. In 1956 a new edition was issued, which contained a general, comparative introduction as well. This version went through five subsequent editions.²⁷ Its German translation²⁸ was published six times. It was also translated into Czech, Slovak, Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian.

The main body of his mythology, however, is a series of more or less accurate prose translations of various ancient texts. It is a collection of mythological sources rendered in a logical system and offering easy reading. Therefore it can also be regarded as part of Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel's work as a translator. Translations were promoted by the regime as a means of educating the masses, and since other fields of creative work were prohibited for many intellectuals, publishers had no difficulty finding talented translators. Some people think that the Communist period was the golden age of translation in Hungary.²⁹ Trencsényi-Waldapfel was a productive translator who considered translating to be excellent means through which to arrive at a profound understanding of texts. His translations were published a decade after his death in a volume which contains epic works (*Theogonia* and *Erga kai hemerai* by Hesiod), drama (*Prometheus Bound*, *Antigone*, *Hippolytus*, *Dyscolus*), 150 pages of lyric poetry (by authors like Alkman, Pindar, and Martialis), and some prose writers (*Pro Archia poeta* and five letters by Cicero, dialogues by Lucian). In accordance with twentieth century Hungarian

26 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Görög-római mythologia* (Budapest: Győző Andor, 1936).

27 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Mitológia* (Budapest: Gondolat, 1956). Further editions were published in 1960, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1983.

28 Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, *Töchter der Erinnerung: Götter- und Heldensagen der Griechen und Römer mit einem Ausblick auf die vergleichende Mythologie*, trans. Mirza Schüchling (Budapest: Corvina; Berlin: Rutten & Loening, 1964).

29 Róbert Simon, "Az első hiteles magyar Ezeregyéjszaka története az európai recepció tükrében," in *Az Ezeregyéjszaka meséi*, trans. Csilla Prileszky, vol.1 (Budapest: Móra Könyvkiadó, 1999), 26.

standards, his poetic translations are metrically accurate, and they are not lacking in poetic strength at all.

One often comes across strange proportions in the output of classical scholars working in Communist countries: very few original monographs, many translations. There are various possible explanations. Being allowed to publish a book was a rare privilege, and censorship did not make it too attractive an enterprise; cultural policy promoted translations as an educational tool rather than strictly scholarly work; many scholars just lacked the inspiration or stamina to work or write, which may have been a symptom of general societal depression. None of the above reasons explains the case of Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, though the result seems nonetheless similar. He was always planning to write a proper synthesis, but he never had the time to work systematically on a more comprehensive project, and therefore his only strictly scholarly volume published in the Communist period was a collection of papers. As an exemplary publication, however, one can refer to his translation of Hesiod's *Erga*, which appeared as an autonomous volume in the bilingual series of the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.³⁰ The book presents Trencsényi-Waldapfel as a scholar. It contains an introduction (6–36), which discusses the available information on Hesiod and his works in mainstream Communist terms, the *Erga* in Greek and in his Hungarian translation (37–82), commentary (83–96), and five studies on Hesiod (97–216)³¹ that partly discuss questions of literature but mostly focus on comparative religion. The translation that legitimised the publication of the volume in the series is twenty-two pages (828 lines) long. It is useful, readable, and enjoyable. The introduction exemplifies the horror of the worst kind of Marxist literary interpretation. The Hesiod studies actually make up a book on Hesiod. The monograph is convincing when it addresses questions of religion and mythology. It is less compelling when the topic is literature,

30 Hésiodos, *Munkák és napok* (Budapest: Szépirodalmi Könyvkiadó, 1955), *Scriptores Graeci et Latini/Görög és latin írók* 3.

31 I did not mention the *Indices* (217–225).

although the comparative material on Eastern parallels to Hesiod's prologues is highly valuable.³² It would be unfair to say that this 1955 book was the tail end of Trencsényi-Waldapfel's scholarly output, since he wrote excellent papers later as well. However, as a rare monographic elaboration on classical topics published in Communist Hungary it is exemplary, and it presents its author as a translator and scholar whose achievements were rather more uneven in literary than in religious studies.³³

- 32 Three of the studies were included in his 1959 collection of papers (with slightly modified titles), and they were all retained in the second edition by János György Szilágyi.
- 33 The bilingual series *Scriptores Graeci et Latini* [Görög és latin írók] was a remarkable enterprise undertaken by the community of classical scholars in Hungary. Although a translation targets a wider public, a bilingual edition is a rather scholarly project. Trencsényi-Waldapfel's volume of Hesiod was exceptional in the high proportions of discursive paratexts, but long introductions were characteristic for the whole the series. I therefore find it useful to include a list of volumes published in this series in order to show which authors were translated and who wrote commentaries: 1) Ovid, *Fasti*, 1954 (intr. István Borzsák, trans. László Gaál); 2) Aristotle, *Athenaion politeia* — Pseudo-Xenophon, *Athenaion politeia*, 1954 (intr. János Sarkady, trans. Zsigmond Ritoók); 3) Hesiod, *Erga kai hemerai*, 1955 (Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel); 4) Terence, *Phormio*, 1961 (intr. Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel, trans., comm., and a paper on Terence's reception in Hungary by Egon Maróti); 5) Ovid, *Amores*, 1961 (László Gaál); 6) Persius, 1961 (intr. István Károly Horváth, trans. Gyula Muraközy); 7) Aristotle, *Organon*, vol. 1, 1961 (intr. and comm. Sándor Szalai, trans. Ödön Rónafalvi & Miklós Szabó); volume 8, which was supposed to contain volume 2 of *Organon*, has never been published; 9) Juvenal, 1964 (intr. István Károly Horváth, trans. Gyula Muraközy); 10) Pseudo-Longinus, *Peri hypsous*, 1965 (Ferenc Nagy); 11) Cato, *De agri cultura*, 1966 (intr. Egon Maróti, trans. József Kun); 12–13) Appian, *Bella civilia*, 1967 (István Hahn); 14) Varro, *Res rusticae*, 1971 (intr. Egon Maróti, trans. József Kun); 15) Menander, *Epitrepontes*, 1971 (Gábor Devcséri); 16) Statius, *Silvae*, 1979 (intr. György Hegyi, trans. Gyula Muraközy); 17) *Ancient Greek Sources of the Esthetics of Music*, 1982 (Zsigmond Ritoók); 18) *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 1987 (Tamás Adamik).

**Classics in Hungary and the Party Line:
The Case of Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel**



**Imre Trencsényi-Waldapfel,
Rector of the University of Szeged, 1950.**

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TRENCSENYI-WALDAPFEL IMRE

MITOLÓGIA

GONDOLAT

Trencsényi-Waldapfel's most popular work, *Mythology*.



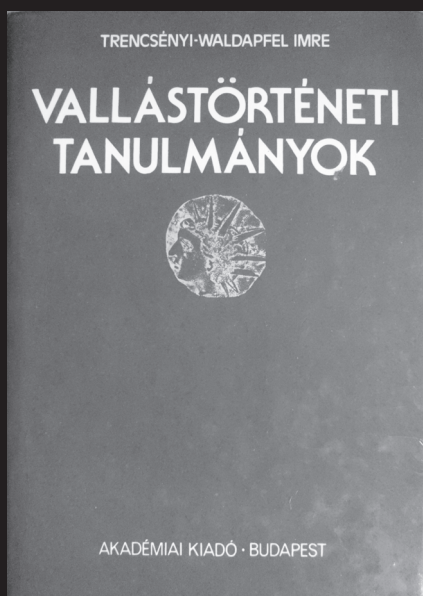
TRENCSENYI-WALDAPFEL IMRE

(1908 – 1970)

Még alig hangzottak el a szavak, alig láttak napvilágot a neki dedikált tanulmányok, amelyek hatvanadik születésnapját ünnepelték, mikor döbbsent megrendüléssel vettük a régen fenyegető s mégis olyan váratlan tudósítást hirtelen haláláról. Mint a Magyar Tudományos Akadémiának két évtizede tagja s az I. Osztályon hat éven át a klasszika filológia egyedüli képviselője, mint a budapesti egyetemnek két évtizeden át s utolsó éveiben egyedüli klasszikus filológus professzora, mint a magyar ókortudomány idegen nyelvű publikációs orgánumának, az Acta Antiqua-nak alapítása óta főszerkesztője és az Antik Tanulmányok-nak alapításától szerkesztőbizottsági tagja, mint az Ókortudományi Társaság elnöke, a magyar ókortudománynak vitathatatlanul legfőbb képviselője volt, s tudományunk két évtizedes hazai történetére az ő személyisége nyomta rá a bélyegét. Kikerülhetetlenné teszi ez a feladatot, hogy mikor bámulatosan sokoldalú életművének azt a részét, amelyet a klasszika-filológiának szentelt, most mint lezárt egészet kíséreljük meg felmérni, egyúttal egész tudományunk hazai történetébe állítsuk be ezt a több

Al Trencsényi-Waldapfel's obituary by János György Szilágyi
published in Antik Tanulmányok / Acta Antiqua, with a
klasszika portrait of the deceased.

Husztai József «A magyar tudománypolitika alapvetése» c. kiadványban állapította meg, hogy «a kezdet (ti. az 1870-es évek) szép lendülete után a kezdet-



Posthumous second edition of Trencsényi-Waldapfel's selected papers, edited by János György Szilágyi.



A medal with Trencsényi-Waldapfel's portrait as an inspiration to Pioneers.

The idea for this book came from “Gnóthi seauton! Classics and Communism: The History of the Studies on Antiquity in the Context of the Local Classical Tradition in the Socialist Countries 1944/45–1989/90,” a Focus Group project at Collegium Budapest in 2009–2010, convened by Jerzy Axer, György Karsai, and Gábor Klaniczay, and supported by the Fritz Thyssen Stiftung. The project was coordinated by Edit Farkas. The book itself was edited by György Karsai, Gábor Klaniczay, David Movrin, and Elżbieta Olechowska. All studies in the present volume have been anonymously peer-reviewed. Language editing was done by Jason Blake, Thomas Cooper, and Josh Roccio. Additional help came from the research project z6–4163 at the Slovenian Research Agency, conducted by David Movrin, as well as from the Department of Classical Philology at the University of Ljubljana Faculty of Arts, and from the Faculty of “Artes Liberales” at the University of Warsaw. Bibliographical assistance was provided by Julija Hoda and Polonca Zupančič. The index was composed by Ana Bembič, Marija Gardina, Julija Hoda, Martina Ješovnik, Doroteja Novak, and Polonca Zupančič. Unless the source is clearly mentioned, all materials used in the book belong to the authors or to the public domain. Should, despite our efforts, you recognize copyrighted material, please contact the Editors. The book was designed and set into type by Uroš Zorman and Jure Preglau. It was printed in Ljubljana by Birografika Bori, an innovative graphics company where people with muscular dystrophy and other handicaps are part of the team and considered as equals. The cover was designed by Ana Skok. The photo of the Berlin Wall was taken by Mitshu. The text face is Minion Pro, designed by Robert Slimbach. The paper is Salzer Eos, made at the St. Pölten Stattersdorf paper mill in Austria. It is of archival quality and acid free.